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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000739

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL'S MAOIST LEADERS RETURN TO INFLEXIBLE STANCE
ON CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

REF: A. KATHMANDU 723

[B](#). KATHMANDU 652

[C](#). KATHMANDU 675

Classified By: DCM Robert K. Boggs for reasons 1.5 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: In an April 22 mass meeting held in southwestern Nepal, Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai reportedly stated that the "introductory round" of peace talks originally scheduled for April 21 was postponed (ref A) due to ambiguity in the government's stand on the "political agenda" of the talks (i.e. the question of a constituent assembly.) Variousy calling on King Gyanendra to clarify the Government of Nepal (GON)'s position or take part in the talks personally, he reiterated the Maoist commitment to a constituent assembly. Bhattarai's speech, peppered with belligerent rhetoric, echoed similar comments made in an April 21 press release by Maoist leader Prachanda. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Speaking to a public gathering in the southwestern district of Kailali on April 22, Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai reportedly claimed that his negotiating team postponed peace talks scheduled for the previous day (ref A) because the GON had not taken a clear position on the issue of a constituent assembly. Stating that "the King has been sending contradictory messages," Bhattarai insisted that "if the King is really honest about peace, he should come up with a clear political agenda." Newspaper reports of the speech were contradictory, with some claiming that Bhattarai said the Maoists "surfaced in the public to hold direct talks with the King," and other reports quoting him as saying the Maoists would meet with the King's emissaries.

[1](#)3. (U) Bhattarai also told the crowd, which reports estimated at approximately 30,000, that the Maoists would not abandon their basic demands. "There is no alternative to the requirement of a new constitution, which should be built through a constituent assembly, followed by a round-table conference and an interim government," he reportedly said.

[1](#)4. (U) Reports of Bhattarai's speech included some examples of hyperbolic saber-rattling, including his promise of "a decisive war" if the government does not seriously pursue peace talks. "We returned to the peace process not because we wanted a safe landing after being defeated or exhausted by war," Bhattarai reportedly said, "but because we wanted a progressive political outlet." Stating that the Maoists have "thousands of cadre who are ready to lay down their lives," as well as "ultramodern rocket launchers," Bhattarai proclaimed that "if the state tries to crush (the Maoists), we will fight a decisive war to capture power at the center."

[1](#)5. (U) Bhattarai's comments echoed an April 21 press release by Maoist leader Prachanda. Breaking his month-long silence, the Maoist Chairman said that "it is well known that (the Maoists) are moving responsibly forward in the talk process," and that the GON "is trying to strengthen its power rather than proposing a political solution." In the April 21 release, Prachanda backed away from previous statements made by the Maoist negotiating team, which had indicated a willingness to work with an all-party government, and repeated his demand for a constituent assembly. "The constitution of the past has failed to find a solution to the problems facing the people," the statement read. "Therefore there is an urgent need to form a new constitution... The assumption of various political parties, including the Communist Party - United Marxist Leninist, that only a so-called all-party government can... resolve the crisis facing the country is an illusion." Stating that "neither a so-called all-party government, nor reinstatement of the old parliament, nor reinstatement of the Deuba government" would be able to resolve the crisis, Prachanda said that the "real political solution can be found only by focusing on the peace process and by movement toward building a new constitution through a constituent assembly."

[1](#)6. (C) Comment: Bhattarai's statement is clearly offered as a pretext for the Maoists' decision to postpone the opening round of talks after publicly lambasting purported delays on the part of the GON. Pinning the delay on the GON's failure to address the controversial topic of a constituent assembly

at the first round of negotiations is a flimsy cover for an obvious desire on the part of the Maoists to see how events--ongoing student unrest (refs A and B) and rumored changes in the Cabinet (ref C)--play out. The Maoists' sudden inflexibility on the issue of a constituent assembly raises questions about the motive behind this apparent shift in rhetoric. The Maoists undoubtedly have heard rumors that the GON is considering an all-party government, and are striving to prevent the parties from joining forces with the King. Post does not see the change as evidence of a split in the Maoist ranks, but will continue to monitor the situation closely in the coming weeks.

MALINOWSKI